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DDE/nmr

12 January, 1945



Dear General Marshall:

While it seems to me that within the past two weeks I have sent to you on various subjects telegraphic words that in their total would fill a good sized volume, I have not recently written you a personal, confidential letter.

At the moment our most worrisome area is the south. While there is nothing vital in that region that we should not be able to cover easily if we could solve all of our problems from the purely tactical viewpoint, the great danger is that Devers will be caught out of position and some of his troops manhandled. The French were so completely upset over my plan to pull out of the Alsace Plain, that obviously the problem became, in its larger sense, a military one. I could not have the weakened French forces trying to fight a battle by themselves and, more serious than this, I could not have the French government getting in extremely bad position with its population, a consequence which it was apparent de Gaulle thought would follow upon a voluntary evacuation of Alsace.

When Devers turned his complete Seventh Army northward, he was badly mistaken in the ability of the French Army to finish off the Colmar pocket. At that time he had been directed to turn part of the 15th Corps northward, west of the Vosges, in order to support Patton's right but it was expected that his first concern east of the mountains would be to clean up his own rear. I must say that he can scarcely be blamed for making a miscalculation with respect to the French, because the forces opposing them in the pocket were at that time estimated at not over 12,000 to 14,000 fighting men. Nevertheless, it is a very bad thorn in our side today.

Tomorrow morning the attacks on the northerly side of the Ardennes salient are being extended. Ridgway's 18th Corps will come in, attacking in the direction of St. Vith. As our lines shorten in the salient I will be able to get a reserve out of re-fitting divisions, and these will be so stationed as to support our right.

I am going up to visit Bradley tomorrow. I hope that if he can only make some significant penetration from his side of the salient, particularly one that might result in the destruction or capture of considerable enemy forces, you will consider him at once for four star promotion. I think it would have a fine general effect. For many reasons I should like to have Spaatz promoted also.

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The weather is abominable. It seems to me that I have fought weather for two years and a half. Right now, at my base headquarters, a foot of snow is on the ground. Flying conditions in the battle zone have been almost impossible for several days. A week of good weather would be nothing less than a godsend.

Gasser came in today and I have given him sweeping authority.

Everybody is in good heart. You need have no fear that we will eventually solve our problems.

Sincerely,



General of the Army George C. Marshall
The Chief of Staff
War Department
Washington 25, D.C.

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